

6/20/2016

To: Policy & Governance Committee (Commissioners Peterman and Randolph)

From: Rachel Peterson, Leuwam Tesfai, and Dave Gamson

Re: Improvements to Communications Log

This memo presents an update on improvements to the Commission's ex parte communications log.

As you know, the Commission established a voluntary system in November 2014 for reporting one-on-one in-person or phone meetings held by interested parties with decision-makers. A year and a half into this effort, the Commissioners have determined that retaining and refining the communications log is part of the CPUC's transparency-related work.

We have worked with our IT team to develop, test, and execute round one of the Commissioner-requested improvements. These also reflect focus group feedback, advisor input, IT input on technical feasibility, and our own experience as advisors.

Special thanks to our IT team: Hung Lam, Dennis Hong, and Vince Houben.

Purpose

As Commissioners have previously decided, the purposes of the communications log are:

- Provide transparency into the range of one-on-one meetings that decision-makers hold with persons or organizations interested in the outcome of a ratesetting proceeding.
- Build trust that the universe of such meetings is being made transparent to the public, and that the content of the meetings is being accurately represented by the reporting person/party.
- Allow searches of the universe of ex parte meetings by decision-maker, party, proceeding, time, and other criteria.
- Build public value that outweighs the internal burden on CPUC staff to voluntarily disclose ex parte meetings.

First round of updates:

1. Breadcrumb change: Communications with ~~Regulated Entities~~ Interested Parties
2. Title change: Communications ~~Contact~~ Log
3. Clarified and simplified webpage language to address general public
4. Defined decision-makers as Commissioners, ALJs, and Commissioner advisors (division directors eliminated)
5. Link to the CPUC's Rules of Practice and Procedure
6. Streamlined information on reports of communications from October 2014 to December 2014
7. Redesigned landing page to show all logged meetings rather than a blank search page; entries displayed with the most recent meeting first

8. Added drop-downs to column headers (Date of Meeting, Interested Party, etc.) with new sorting features (e.g., ascending/descending order, ability to select for single party name)
9. New column with direct link to relevant proceeding docket card, where user can find the specific ex parte notice
10. New link to a separate search page with updated Search Hints and renamed categories (e.g., Interested Party instead of Non-CPUC Participant)

Next Steps

1. If the above are approved by Commissioners, the revisions will go live by 6/29/2016
2. Outstanding update for Commissioner determination:
 - a. Verification button protocol for ex parte notices. Given concerns raised by Commissioners at the last committee meeting, we do not recommend inclusion of a verification button at this time but wanted to highlight the issue in case Commissioners would like further discussion.
 - i. Pros: Retains the unique CPUC communications log with the public values described above. Of several state and Federal agency websites reviewed, only the FCC maintains a similar log. This also allows for consistent internal logging practices.
 - ii. Cons: Verification button may be viewed by users and advisors as an insufficiently robust indicator of completeness or accuracy of an ex parte filing.